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Iowa Polio Stories Oral History Project wraps up with an amazing collection

“The State of Iowa at present is confronted with a very serious problem. There is no question but that this epidemic is going on and that the state is going to be afflicted - and grievously afflicted - with this disease before we get through.”

Dr. G.E. Decker
Member, State Board of Health
Davenport, Iowa, 1910

Thus begins Kate Scott’s final report to the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust on the Iowa Polio Stories project. The 2007 All Iowa Reads book, *Splendid Solution: Jonas Salk and the Conquest of Polio* by Jeffrey Kluger was the genesis of the project.

Scott was hired in June 2007 as Iowa Polio Stories project manager by Katherine Von Wald, coordinator for the Iowa Center for the Book. The Roy J. Carver Trust and the State Library of Iowa funded the project.

Scott, with the help of volunteers, recorded 51 audio interviews from Iowans scattered across more than 26 counties. Those interviewed ranged in age from 55 to 96.

The Iowa Polio Stories project includes audio tapes, individuals’ photographs, personal letters, medical documents and newsclippings was turned over to the Iowa Historical Society in Iowa City. Summaries and some of the pictures from 49 of the interviews are located on the [Iowa Center for the Book’s Web site](#).

Scott wrote in her report how the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* ran photographs from 1939 to 1959 conveying the complex duality of fear and hope in the expressions of a generation of Iowans with little or no medical explanation or cure for their conditions.

“The photographs left me wondering where are they now? How did polio affect their lives, families, employment, physical health and emotions,” Scott said.

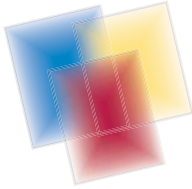
The collection targeted three primary audiences: 1) the medical community, 2) family and friends of those afflicted, and 3) polio survivors.

“By these voices, this funding has made it possible to begin to document and preserve perhaps the most critical, yet overlooked, element in this historical narrative,” said Scott.

In her report, Scott noted that “Modern day epidemics such as AIDS, SARS, and other contemporary crises in medicine encourage us to reflect on a wide historical range of public health issues. In October of 2007, international health officials released news about an outbreak of polio in Nigeria caused by the vaccine designed to stop it. At least 69 children were left paralyzed. But for the generations of Americans who did not live through the epidemic, many remain unaware of the intensity of the fear that swept the country



Sixteen-year-old Joann Hall receiving hot pack treatments at Blank Children’s Hospital in 1950.



and the overwhelming sense of desperation felt by families that were afflicted by polio. A very serious problem currently exists for polio survivors who must work with new generations of physicians about the long-term effects of polio on their muscles, nerves, joints and bones.

“Iowa Polio Stories is a valuable primary resource for future generations. But, it is also important to note that this project comes full circle as part of the 2007 All Iowa Reads Program. A number of polio survivors recalled how important reading was to their emotional well-being. They remember that reading operated as a form of escapism. Said interviewee Patricia Moreland, ‘I loved to read. I would read three or four books a week in addition to my schoolwork. Part of the appeal of reading was that I could go into a whole other world - a world where I could run and jump and do things. I think that was partly why I loved to read so much.’ Reading enhanced imaginations and allowed survivors to break free of doctors, nurses, braces and crutches - free of polio.”

In addition to the oral histories, the Iowa Polio project has 60 stories from people who were affected and sent their written stories for the Web site. Photographs are also available from the Iowa Historical Society and Iowa Methodist Medical Center, as well as from polio survivors.

The following are brief summaries from four of the 60 polio stories submitted to the Web site:

Bob Alexander - Warren County

Previous to September, Eugene Dooley came to our home selling serious illness policies. My parents purchased one for \$15 a year. This insurance paid the entire bill, no questions asked. At the time, the room rate was \$12.50 a day and the therapy and hot pack treatments were \$4 a day.

Katherine Howsare - Polk County

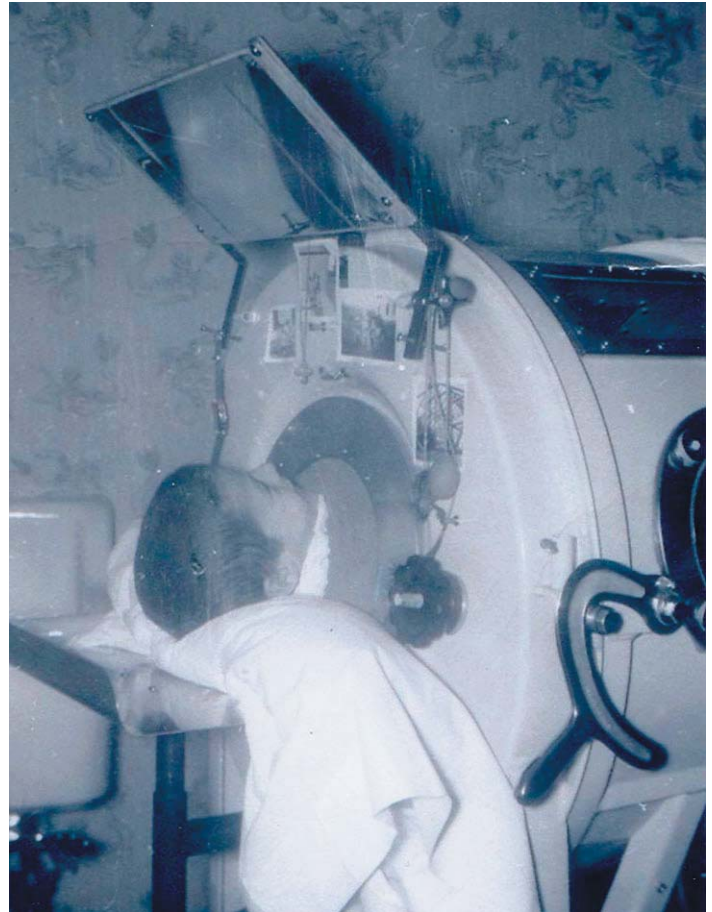
My 2nd grade teacher was left with heavy metal braces on both legs and metal crutches. Our classroom was on the second floor, and there was, of course, no handicapped access.

Janet Nagle, Scott County

Had the polio vaccine been in existence before [my husband's] birth, he would have been spared much suffering. Dr. Salk is a true hero; his vaccine has been a huge benefit to humanity.

Edna Stoll, Wright County

I was in the iron lung for over 2 weeks and once during that time it stopped working and they came in with what looked like a tire pump and took turns pumping it until another lung could be brought over from Lutheran Hospital in Des Moines.



Mike Boeckman photographed in his iron lung in 1952. He was one of several family members to contract polio. Mike survived in his iron lung for ten years. He died at the age of 17 from complications from pneumonia. Oral history by his cousin, Mary Ogren Osborn.



Online conference such a success, next year's is already being planned

"I love the online format -- especially during winter!"

"What a great way to communicate without leaving home!"

"This is such a cool idea. I love being at my desk and still involved in this conference."

The above are just three of the responses the Iowa Small Library Online Conference (ISLOC) Team received from participants who took part in the day-long training on January 16, 2008.

More than 100 Iowa librarians and trustees attended the session, which was sponsored by the State Library, and Central, Northwest and Southwest library service areas. The entire conference, from the keynote sessions to the conversation lounge to the exhibit hall, was held online in Wimba Live Classrooms made available through the State Library's Community Partnership with WebJunction. The Live Classroom is an online space that attendees log into at the same time and which allows everyone with speakers or headsets to hear (through Voice Over IP) what's going on inside the classroom. With microphones, attendees could also speak to everyone, although participants didn't need microphones. The Live Classroom comes equipped with a chat area, so everyone could still share, with or without a microphone.



The ISLOC Team hoped the conference would make it possible for everyone, regardless of the size of library or budget, to attend a conference and the team was not disappointed! Librarians and trustees from libraries of all sizes were able to attend, even though the weather turned out to be very snowy that day.

"I was quite pleased and surprised we had so many to kick off our first Online Conference," said Michele Leininger, State Library Continuing Education Consultant and ISLOC Team member. "We had 83 people in the classroom when Michael Stephens spoke at 9 a.m."

Attendees heard from keynote speakers Michael Stephens from Illinois ("The Hyperlinked Library") and Pat Wagner from Colorado ("Improving Library Co-Worker Relationships: Getting Along with Nice People in Stressful Times"). Concurrent sessions included "Cool Tools, Gadgets, and Widgets," "WebJunction," "The Buddy System: Collaborating with Colleagues Online," and "The Interactive Library: Promoting Services Online." A session in the evening focused on trustees and the Library 2.0 world: "Trustee 2.0." A session on games and a conversation lounge kept everyone busy over lunch, and a virtual exhibit hall connected attendees with vendors interactively.

Karen Burns, administrator at the Southwest Iowa Library Service Area and chair of the ISLOC Team, said "We knew immediately that we were going to be planning another conference in 2009; the team is already at work on this now-annual event. We hope to see even more attend next year, so be on the look-out for the Team's announcement later this year."

ISLOC Team members are:

Karen Burns, Southwest Iowa Library Service Area
 Ann Coulter, Director, LRC Southwestern Community College
 Tena Hanson, Milford Public Library
 Michele Leininger, State Library of Iowa
 Bonnie McKewon, Northwest Iowa Library Services
 Pat Means, Villisca Public Library
 Sarah Willeford, Central Iowa Library Service Area



Iowans Visit their Libraries in Cyberspace

State Library Puts 270 Libraries on the Web

Iowa has 270 public libraries with new Web sites thanks to the State Library of Iowa's PLOW project – Putting Libraries on the Web. Iowa is the only state in the country whose state library is providing such a service. More than half a million Iowans live in communities served by libraries with a PLOW Web site. The project was made possible by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to expand public access computing in Iowa public libraries.

Today's library customers expect to visit their library via the Internet as well as in person. On the new PLOW Web sites, Iowans find local information specific to each community such as population profiles and links to city and county information. They use the Web sites to find employment, research health issues, complete school assignments, enhance their job skills, and stay in touch with distant friends. They do research using links to high quality Web sites which were evaluated by librarians. The PLOW Web sites also link Iowans to the library's catalog and to special e-resources available through libraries, such as EBSCOhost, a database of magazine articles.

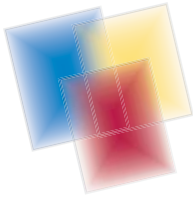
Library Web sites are important because they connect Iowans with accurate and helpful library information and services around the clock, said State Librarian Mary Wegner. "Public libraries are a key part of lifelong learning opportunities for Iowans," said Wegner. "Computers and the Internet bring the whole world of information and ideas into all Iowa libraries, regardless of size. The PLOW Web sites help Iowans be competitive in the 21st century and make it possible for public libraries to deliver services in new ways."

To carry out the project, the State Library provided nearly 100 training sessions to participating libraries; more than 400 library staff members spread across Iowa attended. The librarians learned how to enhance their PLOW Web sites and keep them up to date. The list of libraries and links to their PLOW Web sites are available at <http://www.statelibraryofiowa.org/ld/plow/plowlibs>.

The original target for the PLOW project was 100 libraries, but 270 libraries participated. Due to continuing demand, a second round of 46 more libraries began training in January.

Iowa librarians report that benefits of the PLOW Web sites include providing information to customers 24/7, helping customers find high quality resources on the Internet, and making the library more visible in the community. Librarians made these comments about their community's response to the project:

- We know they're [customers] using it [Web site] because they come into the library and say "I saw this on your Web site" referring to a new book, a children's program, library sponsored computer classes. Having Web access to the librarian's email has also been helpful to people who have questions for the librarians.
- They [the public] are impressed that we have a Web site and happy with how it looks. They are surprised that given our size, we are able to keep abreast of current technology like this. Thanks!
- They think that it is a way for our rural community to have an opportunity to keep up with the larger communities-it is helping to slow down the increasing gap.
- They love it. Eager to explore all that is offered on it. Read the Board minutes. Like the "Ask a Librarian" and "Request item for purchase" features.



Certification Update

Congratulations to the following public library staff certified for the first time through the State Library's Iowa Certification Program for Public Librarians.

Kim Bigelow, Plainfield
Carmen Buss, Cresco
Donna Chapman, Woodbury County
Molly Keating, Hiawatha
Jannis Larson, Rudd
Jill Peterson, Sheffield
Mary Sebben, Granger
Linda Sones, Quimby
Emory Westcott, Cresco
Virginia Wilson, Paton
Pamela Witt, Polk City



Look for New, Improved State Data Center Web site in 2009

IOWAccess provides funding for updates

The State Library's State Data Center Web site will get a new look in 2009, thanks to funding received from the IOWAccess Revolving Fund in early January.

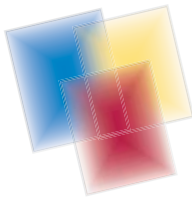
Proposed enhancements to the site will make it easier for Iowa citizens to find, use, and visualize demographic data about Iowa. The changes are in response to requests made by State Data Center customers during focus groups conducted by the State Library. Participants in the focus groups said they loved the State Data Center's data and services, and would like to see more functionality on the Web site.

Planned new features will allow citizens to view data dynamically on the Web. Data users will be able to choose among variables and geographic areas to create customized reports; sort and rank data; visualize trends in charts, graphs, and maps; and download results into spreadsheet, text, or database files.

The funding also will make it possible to replace the obsolete application that is currently used to manage the State Data Center Web site and provide training to the State Data Center staff on the new technology.

The vendor for the project will be selected by June 2008 and conversion of the current site at www.iowadatecenter.org is expected to be completed by July 2009.

The IOWAccess Revolving Fund was established to enhance citizen access to government services or information through technology. It is administered by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services.



News from around the state

Guthrie County Libraries Successful in Getting County Increase

Jeannie Stone, director of the Bayard Public Library, and seven of her colleagues in the Guthrie County Library Association use some pretty successful tactics for getting increased funding from the county board of supervisors.

“We have used the PowerPoint template on the State Library’s Web site for our presentation,” said Stone. “Three years ago we pretty much stuck to the template and punched in our numbers. We also highlighted the inequality between what the county was paying for library service and what city residents were paying. We asked for a 10% increase and it was approved (FY07).



“The second year (FY08) we used a PowerPoint with a different look. We asked for \$8,000 and received \$2,500.

“This year (FY09) we asked for an increase of 4.2%. The PowerPoint was used again with slides printed and given as handouts. Our request was approved. About a week before our presentation, each supervisor got a letter with a little “propaganda” mailed to their residence. The letter stated that we looked forward to meeting with them to discuss libraries and what we would be asking for. We highlighted the average computer usage per day, county wide, and then enclosed things like a bookmark with statistics, a brochure that did the same, and a magnet with all the libraries’ phone numbers, e-mail addresses and our Web sites. We also included a list of the duties of a library director.

“The last two years Bayard presided. This year the Casey Public Library did. The libraries split the responsibilities: One does the cover letter, another one the magnet/bookmark, and we all gather statistics for the presiding library to compile. We go enmasse for the presentation. In fact, we have to meet in a larger room to accommodate the crowd.

“We are blessed to receive wonderful support from the Guthrie County supervisors and ALWAYS show our appreciation.”

Dubuque library receives \$150,000 gift

The Woodward Foundation, a private organization associated with Woodward Communications Inc., awarded Dubuque’s Carnegie-Stout Public Library with \$150,000 which will be used towards the library’s renovation project. The donation to the library was among \$202,000 in gifts to six non-profit organizations in the Dubuque area. Woodward Communications is the parent company of the *Telegraph Herald* newspaper.





Iowa librarian first to complete national CPL Administrator Program

Lois Blythe, Burlington Public Library information technology manager is the first person to complete the Certified Public Library Administrator Program through the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association. Blythe took seven courses in record time, becoming the first public librarian in the nation to earn the designation of CPLA. CPLA is a voluntary credential for public librarians who want to learn managerial skills. Blythe will be honored at the Public Library Association's national conference in Minneapolis, at a casual reception the evening of Wednesday, March 26. Please RSVP to Dr. Arlita Harris at arlita.harris@verizon.net by Friday, March 14th. It will be in a **VIP Suite at the Hyatt VIP.**



Ames PL receives nationwide grant for investment information services

The Ames Public Library received \$77,672 to partner with Iowa State University Extension to improve finance and investment information services to its customers. The library was one of only 13 grants nationwide from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Investor Education foundation and the American Library Association. The grant will enable the library and extension office to create online and on-site investor education classes for customers, and to train librarians on the use of investing information tools and databases. The national program is called "Smart Investing at Your Library," which is designed to help provide unbiased investor information at public libraries.

Cedar Rapids Public Library and Cedar Rapids Museum of Art collaborate to win "Icky" award.

A collaborative creative effort between the Cedar Rapids Public Library and the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art has won two prestigious "Icky" awards for innovation and excellence in the arts. The "Ickys" are sponsored by the Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance (ICCA) and are given annually at a red carpet-style gala event that honors the best in arts and culture in the Cedar Rapids – Iowa City corridor.

When Library Director Lori Barkema came to Cedar Rapids in 2005, she was amazed to find that the library owned a collection of over 850 original art works created by famed children's book illustrators of the 1950s through the 1970s. The illustrations were collected by former children's librarian Evelyn Zerkane, who wrote to respected children's book illustrators of the day and requested samples of their work to share with local children. The collection includes illustrations of such popular characters as Babar, Curious George, Madeline, Paddington Bear, Katie John, and hundreds of others. Most of the illustrations have never been displayed to the public.

Barkema invited CRMA Executive Director Terry Pitts to the library to view the collection. Pitts was equally impressed, and a successful collaboration was born. "Hidden Treasure: Original Children's Book Illustrations From the Cedar Rapids Public Library" highlighted select items from the library's collection. The exhibit ran at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art from January through May of 2007 and drew thousands of visitors locally and from across the country.

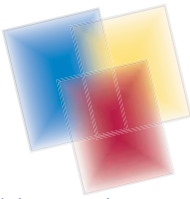
The "Hidden Treasure" exhibit was nominated for "Ickys" in two categories: Visual Arts Programming and the Collaborative Award (among ICCA Members.) "I had hoped we might win one of the awards, but I never dreamed we would win in both categories," said Barkema. "The awards are one more illustration of the importance of the arts and culture in Iowa. The arts bring dollars to the community and enrich our lives in ways that go far beyond the monetary value."

A hand-made "Icky" statuette was presented for each award. One statuette will be kept at the library and the other at the museum—a fitting way to honor the shared project between the two organizations.



Reminder:

*The meeting minutes of the Iowa Commission of Libraries can be found at
<http://www.statelibraryofiaowa.org/about/gov>*



Iowa library directors receive international literacy award

The Hardy Reading Council, an organization of teachers and persons committed to the promotion of reading in Hardin and Grundy Counties, along with the Iowa Reading Association and International Reading Association honored 14 Hardin and Grundy County public library directors for their summer reading programs. The International Celebrate Literacy Award is presented yearly to individuals who have made significant contributions to literacy, and to familiarize the public with literacy activities carried out in their communities.

Those who received the award from Grundy County were La Vonne Sternhagen of Beaman, Susan Blythe of Conrad, Virginia Beecher of Dike, C.J. Thompson of Grundy Center, Janet Slessor of Reinbeck and Julie Stratton of Wellsburg.

From Hardin County, recipients included Janet Miller of Ackley, Libby Caplan of Alden, Sherri Bader of Eldora, Susan Winter of Hubbard, Judy Afdahl of Iowa Falls, Marilyn Rasha-Engelson of Radcliffe, Lois Luiken of Steamboat Rock and Nanci Galloway of Union.

Each librarian was presented with a certificate and a picture book in their honor for their children's collections.

Testimonial to teen reading

Carol VanHook, teacher librarian at Southeast Polk High School, writes that her school learned in early February that they had won the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) Midwest regional teen reading essay competition sponsored by World Wrestling Entertainment. "Our young lady has won tickets to Orlando, FL to compete in the national reading competition. She also won our school library a nice monetary award," said VanHook.

Southeast Polk has won the Midwest competition the past two years. Last year's winner went on to be the national winner.

Iowa City senior moves to final round of competition in the Intel Science Talent Institute

Xiaomeng Zeng, a senior at West High School, Iowa City, is one of 40 finalists out of 1,602 entrants to go to Washington DC for the final round of judging in the Intel Science Talent Institute. Her research project was on library funding. According to Lily Lau, administrator, East Central Library Services, Zeng's mother is a Coe College reference librarian.

Winners will share \$530,000 in scholarships. Many of the previous participants have gone on to distinguished careers in science; six have won the Nobel Prize.

"The 2008 finalists...demonstrate great promise for the future of science in the U.S., providing reassurance that American competitiveness in the sciences is alive and well," said Elizabeth Marincola, publisher of *Science News* and president of Society for Science and the Public.

Cedar Rapids Public Library Board VP tells city council about the important role of libraries

Cedar Rapids expenses are growing at least three times faster than income, and the library is one of several public services facing devastating cuts, including the possibility of closing a branch library. According to an article in the Cedar Rapids Gazette, "Despite the dismal outlook, library board vice president Susan Corrigan said a recent city council meeting was a success because it started a public dialogue."

Corrigan is quoted as saying "Just like we invest in infrastructure, we need to invest in people. The public library is one key way that communities invest in the education of their residents."

She pointed out that the library is an economic development engine by generating foot traffic downtown and helping spur retail growth. According to a recent survey, the library is the number one downtown destination, and its circulation is growing.